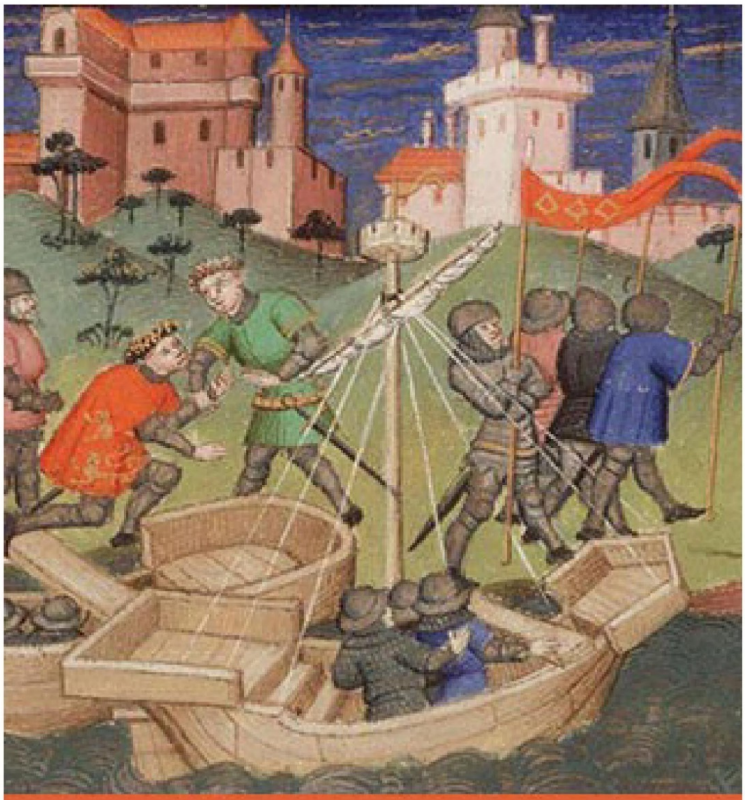

1066 In An Hour

Kaye Jones

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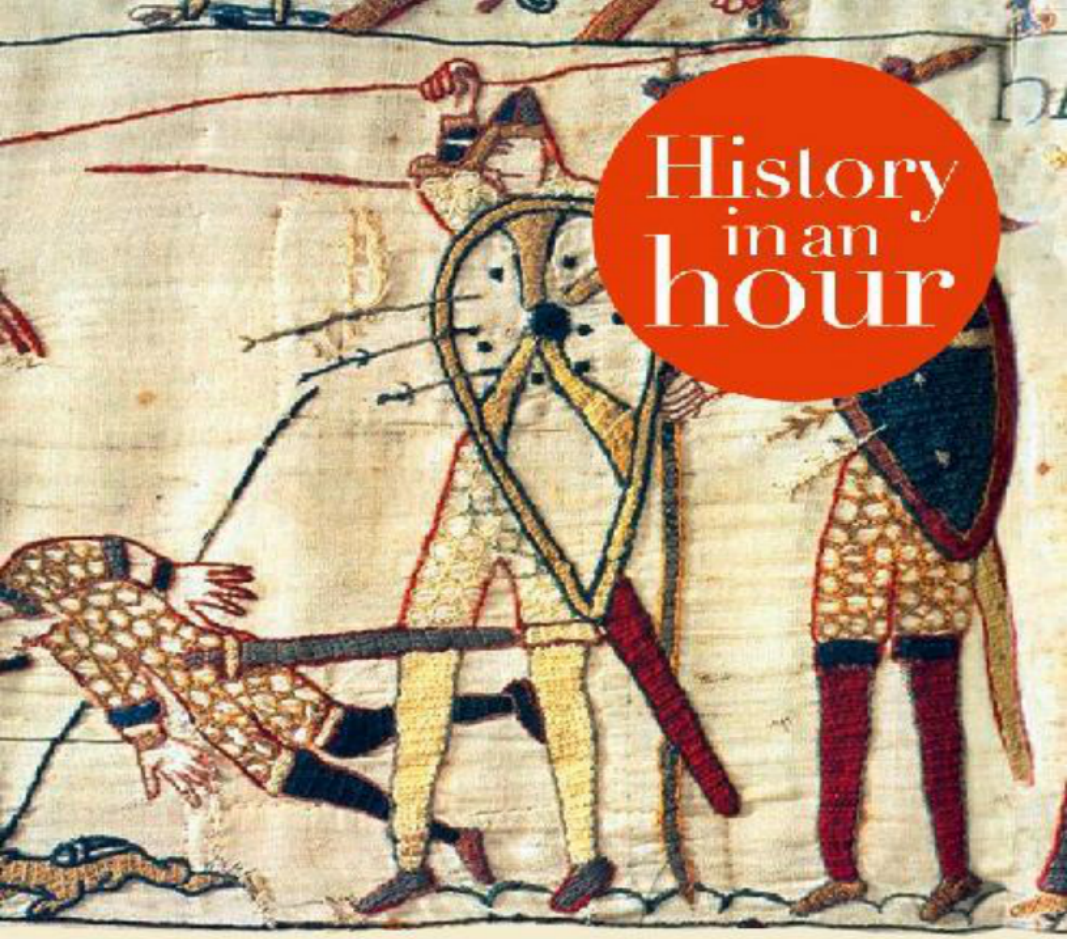

1066

KAYE JONES

1066

History in an Hour

Kaye Jones

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Introduction

> *This was a fatal day to England, and melancholy havoc was wrought in our dear country during the change of its lords.*
>
> William of Malmesbury on the Battle of Hastings

1066 is one of the most famous dates in English history. In those twelve months, England had three different kings and fought three bloody battles in defence of the realm and its people. The result was the Norman Conquest of England, an event which changed the country forever. This book will guide you through those turbulent months to understand the politics and personalities of that momentous year.

This, in an hour, is 1066.

Background to 1066

The year was 1051. King Edward the Confessor had been on the throne for nine years. So far, his reign had been peaceful and he had proven himself to be an able and successful monarch. Since 1045 Edward had been married to Edith, daughter of Earl Godwine, the most powerful nobleman in England. Despite a happy union, rumours abounded that their marriage had yet to be consummated. This created a potentially serious problem; who would succeed to the throne when Edward died?

Edward the Confessor

According to French writers, Edward had devised a solution to this problem; secure the succession by promising the throne to William, Duke of Normandy. The two men were distant cousins and William had visited Edward at his court in England some time in 1051. If William believed then that Edward's promise would make him king of England, then the events of 1064 would only strengthen his resolve.

On his death in 1053, Earl Godwine's authority in England passed to his sons, who became leading figures in English politics, ruling

much of the nation's territories. Again, as reported by French writers, King Edward sent Harold, the most powerful of these sons, to Normandy in 1064. If these writers are to be believed, the purpose of this trip was to confirm Edward's succession promise made to William in 1051.

Harold's journey to Normandy did not start well; he was shipwrecked north of Normandy, in the region of Ponthieu, and captured by the local count, Guy. According to the Bayeux Tapestry, William rushed to Harold's rescue after hearing the news of his imprisonment. Harold then accompanied William into battle and was knighted. The Bayeux Tapestry, and other contemporary sources, recount that at William's palace in Rouen, Harold swore an oath to the duke over holy relics. The exact words of this oath are not recorded, but contemporary writers were convinced that Harold promised to protect William's claim to the throne and do all he could to ensure his succession. With the promise made, Harold returned to England.

Harold Godwinson, as depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry

January 1066: The Death of a King

King Edward had been sick since November, from what appears to have been a series of strokes. Despite a brief recovery, he fell ill again on Christmas Eve. Although he was able to attend the Christmas Day banquet, Edward's illness caused him to miss the consecration of Westminster Abbey, his most famous project.

Although the king's son was often chosen, it was not yet customary in England for the monarch to name his successor. This responsibility was left to the Witan, the king's council of advisers, who were present while Edward lay dying. Choosing a new king was a serious business and, as Edward's marriage had not produced a son, the Witan had developed a strict criterion to help them choose the best man for the job. First of all, the new king had to be an Englishman as the Witan did not want England to be ruled by a foreigner. Secondly, he must be of good character and, finally, be of royal blood. The king was free to nominate a successor but the final decision rested with the Witan.

The First Omen?

Shortly before his death on 4 or 5 January 1066, King Edward began to speak. He told those around him of a recent dream where two Norman monks he had once known recounted to him that God had placed a curse on England. One year and one day after Edward's death, devils would bring fire, sword and war to punish the country for the wickedness of its earls and clergy. The curse would only be lifted when a green tree, felled halfway up its trunk and with one part cut off and taken three furlongs away, would rejoin and grow again.

Stigand, the Archbishop of Canterbury, dismissed his dream as the ravings of a man close to death but others began to worry. After all, Edward was an extremely pious man with a reputation for prophesying the future. But the dream was soon overshadowed by Edward's next action. He offered his hand to Harold and placed the kingdom of England into his protection. After these important announcements, Edward fell back into a coma and died during the night of 4 January 1066.

The Witan Decide

On 5 January, the Witan unanimously confirmed Harold as the new king of England. Not only was he Edward's choice but he was the most

powerful man in England, of good character, a proven soldier and, above all, he was English. There was no mention of William and the alleged promise that was made in 1051, nor of Harold's visit to Normandy in 1064.

Thus, on 6 January 1066, King Edward was buried in Westminster Abbey and Harold Godwinson was crowned King Harold II of England.

Edward the Confessor is buried at Westminster Abbey

The Contenders Emerge

Harold may have been crowned the king of England but, on hearing of King Edward's death, there were other men ready to stake their claim. There was Harald Hardrada, king of Norway, who alleged that his father had been promised the English throne by King Edward's predecessor, King Harthcnut. The young Edgar the Aetheling, a direct ancestor of King Alfred the Great, was another possible contender for the throne. And who could forget William? His claim rested on a distant blood connection to Edward and the alleged promised made in 1051 and renewed in 1064.

There was little doubt among the English that an invasion was imminent; England was a rich and bountiful country. For the claimants, the throne was a prize worth fighting for. At the forefront of Harold's mind was the need to secure his position. A day or so after his coronation, Harold travelled to York in the north of his kingdom. There he married Eadgyth, the sister of the Earls of Northumbria and Mercia, Edwin and Morcar, and received oaths of fealty from the local nobility. Harold also began issuing coins bearing his likeness and inscribed with the word *pax,* meaning peace.

A coin issued by King Harold

February/March 1066: Developments Abroad

The news of Harold's coronation reached Normandy very quickly and William did not take it well. He was furious that Harold had broken his promise and had himself crowned. Adamant that he was the rightful king of England, there was only one option left for the duke; assert his claim by force.

William, Duke of Normandy, as depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry

Knowing that he could not do it alone, he broached this idea to his magnates and received a mixed reception; some supported his desire to invade from the start, but others were going to need more convincing. According to the French writer, William of Poitiers, they believed that taking the throne of England in this way was an 'arduous enterprise' which went 'well beyond the power of the Norman forces'.

Undeterred by the reaction of his magnates, William took his cause to the highest authority in Medieval Europe; the Pope. Fortunately for William, his embassy was successful and secured papal support for the invasion, including a banner for use in battle. This act of propaganda was immensely powerful; William now had God on his side and nobody would challenge his plans for an invasion. To sweeten his magnates, he promised enough supplies for the invasion and lands in England to all those who would join him. William had now set the wheels in motion; he was ready to bring England under Norman control.

April 1066: A Divine Omen?

> *At that time a star appeared in the north-west, its three-forked tail stretched far into the southern sky remaining visible for fifteen days; and it was portended, as many said, a change in some kingdom.*
>
> William of Jumieges

Halley's Comet appeared in the skies above England on 24 April 1066 and was interpreted as an event of major significance. People believed that it was a divine symbol, a warning that dangers would soon threaten the kingdom. Nobody could predict how soon this danger would come, or in what form, but the English would not have to wait too long.

Tostig: A New Problem

Tostig Godwinson was Harold's younger brother and, like the rest of his family, rose to become a prominent figure in English politics. As the earl of Northumbria, Tostig enjoyed great wealth and power over a vast area of northern England. But the situation changed in 1065 when a group of nobles rebelled against him with accusations of misrule and injustice. It became so serious that King Edward sent Harold to intervene. This had a significant impact on Tostig's relationship with Harold, his brother, creating competition and driving a wedge between the two men.

In late 1065 Tostig's earldom was confiscated and, after dismembering several of Harold's servants and attempting to serve them up at a banquet, he was expelled from England. He was given refuge by his father-in-law, the count of Flanders and, sometime after his arrival in France, visited William in Normandy. The details of their meeting are unknown, but it appears that Tostig intended on forming an alliance with the duke and taking revenge on his brother Harold.

Unfortunately for Tostig, William had no interest in his plans for an alliance. The duke had already begun preparations for his forthcoming invasion and had gained the support of his noblemen and the Church. Tostig was, however, undeterred. In his attempts to muster support, he travelled north to rally King Swein of Denmark, and claimant to the English throne, King Harald Hardrada of Norway. Swein was quick to dismiss him but, in Hardrada, Tostig had found a sympathetic ear.

May 1066: Tostig Returns to England

Shortly after the appearance of Halley's Comet, Tostig set out on a solo expedition to England and landed on the Isle of Wight. The islanders, probably very surprised by his presence, treated him in the same way as a Viking raider; they paid him off with food and money in the hope that he would leave. Within a few days he set off once again, this time landing at Thanet and meeting up with his friend and supporter, Copsi. While Tostig was the earl of Northumbria, Copsi had acted as his deputy, carrying out vital administrative functions and overseeing the general governing of the earldom. In 1065, Copsi was expelled from England alongside his lord, possibly accompanying him to Flanders, though the exact details are unknown. Contemporary writers, like Ordericus Vitalis and William of Poitiers, portrayed Copsi as an honest, faithful and loyal servant, ready to protect and advance the interests of his lord at a moment's notice. Thus it is hardly surprising that Tostig turned to Copsi in his hour of need.

Halley's Comet as depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry

In the face of an impending invasion, defending the realm was Harold's main priority and he had recently assembled the Fyrd. The Fyrd were the king's civilian militia; peasant farmers who could be called upon to fight for a maximum of two months per year. By May 1066, they were gathered along the south coast, waiting for a glimpse of William's fleet. They must have been very shocked to see Tostig, the king's brother, there instead.

Tostig Flees England

While Tostig lingered on the south coast, King Harold was in London. He wasted no time in marching south, through Kent, to confront his brother. By the time he reached the south, Tostig had fled with as many ships and men as he could muster. He probably intended to return to his wife in friendly Flanders, but owing to an unfavourable

wind, was forced to sail north.

He landed at the Humber, on the east coast of England, but was quickly seen off by the northern earls, Edwin and Morcar, and so fled to Scotland where he sought refuge with King Malcolm.

June 1066: Harold's Fleet is Ready

Although Harold had a fleet of 300–400 ships, he had no intention of fighting the Normans at sea. Eleventh-century navies were not used for battle, but rather to transport the army to wherever it was needed. By June 1066, Harold's impressive fleet was based on the Isle of Wight, ready to move to wherever the Normans landed. Accompanied by his brothers, Gyrth and Leofwine, and with his army ready to mobilize, Harold probably felt confident in his ability to protect his crown and the people of England. But with no idea of when William might strike, Harold and his men were left to wait.

Over in Normandy, William's invasion preparations kept him busy through the summer months. He had hired as many mercenaries as possible to ensure adequate manpower for the invasion and began building a fleet to carry his army over the English Channel. In early June, William ensured that Normandy would not face the same succession problems as England, by arranging for his son to succeed him should he not return from battle. On 18 June, he accompanied his wife, Matilda, to the dedication of the new abbey at Caen where he asked for God to bless his invasion of England.

The Norwegians

> *Then King Harald and the earl (Tostig) talked long and frequently together; and at last he took the resolution to proceed in the summer to England, and conquer the country.*
>
> *Heimskringla* (a collection of sagas about the Norse kings)

Soon after Tostig's spring visit to Norway, King Harold Hardrada began planning his conquest of England. To provide the bulk of his army, he called on one-half of all men in the country who could carry arms. Harald received a similar reception to that of William in Normandy; some believed that England was too great a country to conquer, while others thought that Harald was the perfect man for the job. Either way, Harald was determined to go on with his plans and, by the summer of 1066, his fleet was stationed at the Solund, the westernmost tip of Norway.

August 1066: Ready for War

In Normandy William's fleet was fully assembled and stationed at the mouth of the River Dives. The only thing left to do was wait for a favourable wind to sail to across the English Channel. Meanwhile, in England, King Harold and the Fyrd remained along the south coast, anticipating the Norman arrival. But with both fleets ready, would it be the Normans who landed first, or would Harold be called to fight his brother and the Norwegians?

September 1066: Problems at Home

On 8 September, after months of waiting, King Harold was forced to disband the Fyrd. No doubt the men were anxious to get back home and attend their fields, with the harvest just around the corner. The fleet sailed back to London and King Harold rode back home to Bosham, West Sussex. There was every reason to believe that it was now too late in the year for the Normans to successfully sail to England. Autumn was well known for its hazardous gales, and perhaps they assumed that changing weather conditions could keep England safe until the spring. Little did they know what lay in the north of the kingdom.

The Northern Problem

At the beginning of September King Harald Hardrada left the Norwegian Solund and sailed to England. He stopped briefly at Shetland and Orkney to pick up reinforcements, and with his 300 ships, headed south to England. After landing at Northumbria, Harald met up with his ally, Tostig, and the pair began ravaging the area, burning Scarborough to the ground. Tostig and the Norwegians had announced their arrival.

Harold was in his home town of Bosham when he was informed of the trouble in the north. On hearing that it was Harold Hardrada who coveted his throne, it is alleged that the king said, 'I will give him just six feet of English soil; or, since they say he is a tall man, I will give him seven feet.'

Harold immediately called on his housecarls, the elite warriors of his army, and marched to London. Within days of his arrival, Harold was informed of the attack on Scarborough. Without hesitation, he summoned the Fyrd and began the march north.

20 September: The Battle of Fulford Gate

On the same day that Harold left London, the Norwegians sailed up the Humber and prepared to enter the city of York. Since hearing of the burning of Scarborough, the earls Edwin and Morcar had gathered as many men as they could and advanced to York. On 20 September, they marched out to fight the enemy, meeting at Fulford, one mile outside the city gates.

History has not preserved many of the details of this battle. We know that the land was about a quarter of a mile across, with a river to the west and a dyke to the east. Both armies were assembled in a line and facing each other, with the strongest men of each army grouped together near the river bank. The English attacked first and, under Morcar's charge, repelled the Norwegians. When King Harald saw his men running away, he sounded the horn and displayed his white battle standard, known as the Land Ravager. This passionate show fired up the Norwegian army and they mounted a frenzied counterattack on the English. Some were able to break free and escape along the river; many others were not so lucky. The battle had lasted only an hour but the Norwegian victory was decisive.

The Norwegians Take York

With nobody to stop them, the Norwegians marched to York and took

the city. The inhabitants had no option but to surrender. As the city's conqueror, Harald was entitled to take hostages, which Tostig gathered, and then the men left York to return to their ships nine miles away on the River Ouse at Riccall. For reasons unknown, King Harald and Tostig did not enter the city again. Perhaps they believed that Fulford was enough to conquer the north and that the only thing left to do was head south. In the meantime, Harald continued to demand more hostages, this time from all over Yorkshire, and the English promised to fetch him 500 men. They arranged to meet on 25 September at the village of Stamford Bridge, eight miles east of York.

25 September: The Battle of Stamford Bridge

On that morning, King Harald divided his army; two-thirds would accompany him to Stamford Bridge and the remainder would stay and look after the ships. Confident that any fighting was over, King Harald, Tostig and the army marched to Stamford Bridge, leaving behind much of their armour. As they approached the village, they were greeted by the sight of shining shields and clouds of dust from horses' feet. Confused at the sight, King Harald asked Tostig whom he thought it might be. Tostig replied that it could be a hostile army but it was more likely men seeking friendship and mercy. What King Harald and Tostig saw that day was not a group of allies, but the army of King Harold. They had ridden tirelessly from London, day and night, and entered the city of the York on the evening of 24 September.

It didn't take long for Harald to realize that this was the English army and, in urgent need of reinforcement, he sent three men on horseback to Riccall. Seeing that many of the English were mounted, Harald positioned most of his army in a defensive circle. The remainder were positioned to defend the bridge over the river. At this point, King Harold rode out in front of both armies, close enough so that the enemy could hear, and asked if Tostig was present. Harold offered to return to his brother his lands in Northumbria if he would swap sides. Tostig refused and the battle began.

Harald's expectations of a mounted attack were soon proven wrong. The battle was fought on foot with swords, spears and axes. According to legend, the bridge was manned by one member of the Norwegian army. A beast of a man, he slayed forty Englishmen who tried to take him on. He was only moved when one of the English soldiers drifted silently down the river, possibly in a boat or swill-tub, and was able to spear him from under the bridge. With the giant Norwegian now dead, the English army took control and beat the Norwegians back over the bridge. With his line almost in tatters, King

Harald charged out and ran at the English, only to be shot in the throat with an arrow.

King Harald had fallen but the battle was not over. Tostig refused his brother's renewed offer of reconciliation and picked up the Norwegian battle standard. Reinforcements arrived from Riccall but some of them were so tired from running the distance in full chainmail that they were unable to fight. The others, however, refused to give up. It took the alleged gruesome decapitation of Tostig by his own brother, Harold, to end the battle. The remaining Norwegians fled to Riccall after the fiercest battle that England had ever known.

The Battle of Stamford Bridge

In the days that followed, King Harold granted safe passage to his enemies on the understanding that they never returned to England. He restored order to the city of York and gave his army some time for rest and recuperation. On 1 October King Harold held a feast in honour of their victory, and for the first time in his brief reign, may have felt secure in his position as the king of England. Sometime during the feast, however, this feeling was brought to an abrupt end. Harold received word that William and his army had landed in England. It is alleged that Harold's brother, Gyrth, offered to lead the English army

instead as he 'owed nothing to William' but the king angrily refused.

28 September: The Normans Arrive

William's patient wait for a favourable wind had finally paid off. On 27 September the Normans set sail for England and arrived at Pevensey, on the south coast, the following morning. As the duke disembarked, he is alleged to have tripped and fallen. His men interpreted this as a bad omen for the invasion. The duke, however, salvaged the situation by grabbing two handfuls of sand and declaring, 'See, my lords, by the splendour of God, I have taken possession of England with both my hands. It is now mine, and what is mine is yours.'

As the English army were still in the north and not yet aware of his arrival, the element of surprise allowed the Normans to disembark without any opposition. William's first decision was to move his army to the more defensible port of Hastings, ravaging scores of villages as they made their way along the south coast.

The Norman fleet

October 1066: Harold Heads South

On 2 October King Harold and his housecarls left York and travelled to London. There, they met up with reinforcements provided by his brothers, Gyrth and Leofwine, who had summoned as many men from their southern and eastern earldoms as possible. From London they marched on to Hastings and arrived on 13 October. Harold's ability to complete this 240-mile journey in under 13 days was an amazing achievement, but the real test of his kingship was yet to come.

Preparing for Battle

The two armies met at Senlac Hill, just north of Hastings. William had been informed of Harold's imminent approach and had set up an outpost at Telham Hill. This was a strategically sound position as it marked the natural entry into a peninsula with tidal water on each side. What William wasn't expecting was that Harold would march through the night to ensure an equally advantageous position. He

chose a large stretch of land, marked only by an apple tree, which would force William to march to the ridge and attack uphill. Similar to Telham Hill, Harold's position was protected on both sides by water but with the added advantage of blocking the main route to London. The twelfth-century writer, William of Malmesbury, says that each army spent the night before battle according to their own 'national custom'. For the English, this meant an evening without sleep and with plenty of drinking and singing. In contrast, the Normans spent the night confessing their sins and saying their prayers. On the morning of the battle, the English marched out with their axes while the Normans received the sacrament and headed out in ranks of infantry and cavalry.

14 October: The Battle of Hastings

The two armies stood in opposition; the English in one line, under the banners of the Dragon of Wessex and the Fighting Man, and the Normans split into three sections, under the papal banner.

William and the Raven Banner

At around 9 a.m., the Normans made the first attack, raining down on the English countless showers of arrows. But the English were strong; having formed a near-impenetrable shield wall which kept the Normans at bay. William sent in his infantry but the English threw down javelins and stones as the Normans charged up the hill. Even the few infantrymen who did make it to the English lines failed to crack the wall.

A frustrated William sent in his cavalry sooner than he probably should have. Within one hour of battle, the left flank of the Norman army had been completely broken. Under such pressure, the left flank retreated and was soon followed by the remaining two divisions. In the chaos, some of the English soldiers made the fatal mistake of chasing after them and breaking their ranks. Rumour quickly spread that William had been killed. To prove otherwise, William removed his helmet and restored some much-needed morale to the Norman troops. This show of force proved to be a turning point in the battle as

William was able to lead a cavalry charge against the English soldiers who had broken rank.

The Normans try to break the English shield wall

Despite such bloodshed, the bulk of the English shield wall was still intact. By the afternoon, William realized that breaking the wall was the key to victory. His new tactic involved a number of feigned retreats to entice the English out of their lines and cut them down as they ran. Harold's brothers, Gyrth and Leofwine, soon became victims of William's deadly tactics and King Harold was not long after.

While legend has it that he was struck in the eye with an arrow, others believe he was slain by the sword. The contemporary *Song of the Battle of Hastings* argues that four Norman knights tore off Harold's limbs and disembowelled him. Whatever the true cause of his death, the English bravely fought on, but without proper leadership, their cause was lost. The Battle of Hastings replaced Stamford Bridge as the longest and most brutal in English history.

The Aftermath

> *The victory being secured, the duke returned to the field of battle, where he viewed the dreadful carnage, which could not be seen without commiseration. There the flower of the youth and nobility of England covered the ground far and near stained with blood.*
>
> Orderic Vitalis

There is some disagreement over what happened to Harold's body after Hastings. The *Song of the Battle of Hastings* states that William had the body wrapped in purple linen and taken back to base camp. Harold's mother, Gytha, 'in the tolls of overwhelming grief, sent to the duke and prayed him to surrender to her' and offering to pay its weight in gold. William refused and said that he would rather 'put him in charge of the shore of that very port – under a heap of stones'. If this is to be believed, then Harold was buried under William's instructions with the inscription: 'You rest here, King Harold, by order of the duke, so that you may still be guardian of the shore and sea.'

Alternatively, it has been suggested that Harold's concubine, Edith Swan-neck, searched the battlefield for her lover's body, recognizing him only by an intimate birthmark. From there she took his body to Waltham and buried him in the Holy Cross church. Whatever the truth, this fact has been overshadowed by Harold's historical reputation as a perjurer; the man who broke his oath of fealty to William and was punished accordingly.

The Process of Conquest

Winning the Battle of Hastings was the first step in the process of conquest. After resting his army at Hastings, William set out on the 350-mile march to take London, the capital city. William knew that he still faced opposition in England so he took an indirect route through some of the south's most important towns. He sent a detachment of his army to punish the town of Romney for killing some of his men when they had first landed, then marched to Dover. This was an important step because it gave him control of the best Channel crossing, should he need to return to France. The inhabitants of Dover surrendered without a fight, whilst the town was sacked and burnt.

While at Dover a large number of William's army went down with gastroenteritis. He waited a week there, adding to the town's

fortifications, and then moved on to Canterbury, leaving behind one-third of his men to recuperate. Like Dover, Canterbury wasted no time in surrendering to William. But his plans to march on London had to be halted; William fell ill and his army was forced to encamp in Canterbury for the next four weeks whilst they waited for William to recover.

The Capital Rebels

Their king may have been dead but many of the English were not prepared to be conquered by a foreign enemy. Surviving members of the nobility, including the earls Edwin and Morcar, and of the English Church were in London after the Battle of Hastings. In a scene reminiscent of January 1066, the Witan were summoned and they elected Edgar the Aetheling the new king of England. Although he had not yet been crowned, the nobility and the people of London pledged allegiance to their 15-year-old king, swearing to fight the Normans on his behalf. If they could hold London for long enough to summon the Fyrd and mobilize the navy, there was still a chance of success.

Edgar the Aetheling

As optimistic as the English may have been, William had recovered from his illness and was edging ever closer to the heart of the capital. He easily put out the opposition at London Bridge and proceeded to burn Southwark to the ground. His rampage continued into Hampshire and Berkshire, and by now, there was little left of south-east England that was not under his control. In the face of such force, could the English in London hold out?

William was fully aware of their rebellion. According to one Norman source, William sent Edgar the Aetheling a secret proposal; that William would be crowned king of England but that he would rule according to Edgar's will. After consulting the Witan, but not revealing the details of this secret proposal, Edgar argued that they should send a false submission to William. This would give them time to prepare their next move.

The English quickly realized that they could not beat William, psychologically or militarily. William had promised to meet any of their demands and had ensured their safety, but had told them that their survival depended on their homage and the throne of England. The English had underestimated their conqueror, and in December, at the Norman camp near Wallingford, they surrendered.

25 December: The Coronation of William I

By mid-December, William felt confident enough to arrange his coronation. His choice of Westminster Abbey held great significance; this was Edward the Confessor's abbey and emphasized William's belief that he was the rightful successor to the throne. Presiding over the ceremony was Aldred, the Archbishop of York, and not Stigand, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had crowned Harold less than a year earlier.

King William I of England, by Matthew Paris (Historia Anglorum)

Wearing full regalia and in the presence of his magnates and the clergy, William swore to defend England's churches, to make and uphold just laws and to rule his kingdom with justice. William was also anointed with holy oil and the significance of this act should not be underestimated. Not only was he was the first duke of Normandy to ever receive the unction, he was now sending a clear message that God had sanctioned his rule over England and her people.

Immediately after the ceremony, the English were asked to acknowledge their new king. When they shouted in reply to this request, the guards wrongly assumed that William had been attacked and so they set fire to the surrounding area. This was a stark reminder, as this turbulent and bloody year came to an end, that it would take more than a crown to make William the true and accepted king of England.

A Conquered People

Thus the hand of the Lord brought to pass the change which a remarkable comet had foreshadowed in the beginning of the same year.

Henry of Huntingdon

Initially King William adopted a conciliatory policy towards the English; he intended to rule with their cooperation. Within a year, however, William had abandoned this policy in the face of growing native resistance. The first rebellion occurred in the south-east where a group of Englishmen allied with the Norman, Eustace of Boulogne, and tried to seize the town of Dover. The rebellion was easily put down, along with a further skirmish in the south-west a year later.

The rebellion of 1069 posed a much more serious threat to the king and had to be stamped out with sheer brutality. Spurred on by hatred of the Normans, the northern earls – Edwin, Morcar and Waltheof – joined forces with the Danes and Scots to replace William with Edgar the Aetheling. They laid waste to the Durham garrison and moved south to take the city of York. William was so furious that he personally led the march north to put down the rebellion.

With the element of surprise on his side, William easily defeated the rebels in Mercia and Yorkshire, and the Danes quickly withdrew. To ensure that an uprising of this scale never occurred again, William ordered the systematic destruction and ruin of Yorkshire, Cheshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Shropshire in an attack known as the Harrying of the North. The English had never witnessed such brutality.

Despite such chaos and bloodshed, the last stand was yet to come. In 1071, the troublesome earls, Edwin and Morcar, rebelled once again. This time, Edwin was killed but Morcar was able to escape to the Fens of East Anglia and allied himself with the infamous rebel, Hereward the Wake. It was only with the help of the local monks in locating the rebels that William was able to crush the uprising and restore royal authority. Hereward was able to escape but Earl Morcar spent the rest of William's reign in prison. During the 1070s there were further outbreaks of rebellion but they posed no serious threat to William's security.

The motte at the remains of Sandal Castle

Prior to the Norman Conquest, castles were non-existent in England. Though the Romans and Saxons had built defensive fortifications, the castle was very much a Norman import. Designed to intimidate and control, these imposing structures had a dual purpose; they provided a home for the new nobility and a base from which the Normans could effectively rule the country. In the early days of the conquest, when the Normans were under pressure to quickly subjugate the local population, Norman castles were built with wood and consisted of a motte (a man-made hill) and a bailey (an enclosure). Though rudimentary in construction, these castles contained living quarters, a great hall and a chapel. As native resistance to the Normans declined, the wooden motte and bailey constructions were rebuilt in stone. Some of the finest examples of Norman castles include Colchester, Dover, Lincoln and Warwick.

Not only did the Normans radically change the country's landscape with castles but also the pattern of landholding in England. William rewarded his Norman and French followers with lands and titles at the expense of the English aristocracy, and in some cases, the Normans forcefully took the lands they desired. The English Church suffered a similar fate; William soon replaced the English archbishops and bishops with Normans. Nowhere were these changes more evident than in William's great survey of 1086, which the English nicknamed 'Domesday' – the coming of the end of the world.

The Conquest also had a great impact on language and culture in England. French and Latin replaced English as the new languages of

the aristocracy, government and the Church. The English language would now be associated with uncivilized people, the uneducated and those of low status. Many English imitated their conquerors by adopting Norman names like Robert or Henry, and this effect of the Conquest is still visible today.

It is difficult to comprehend the upheaval brought about by the Norman Conquest. Landholding patterns, the castle-building programme and the decline of the English language in public life are just a few of the consequences of the new regime. In less than twelve months, the English had buried King Edward, crowned King Harold, repelled a Norwegian invasion, been defeated by the Normans, and finally, crowned King William. On his death in 1087, William's conquest of England was complete and the crown passed to his son, William Rufus. But 1066 had left an indelible scar on the English nation which would ensure that its people would never be conquered again.

Appendix 1: Key Players

King Edward the Confessor (*c.*1003–4/5 January 1066)

Edward was born around 1003 to King Aethelred II and Queen Emma. Little is known about his early years, but after the Danish invasion of 1013, Edward and his family were exiled and fled to Normandy. They returned one year later but were exiled again in 1016. With the support of Earl Godwine, Edward was able to return in 1041 and was crowned king in 1042.

Edward the Confessor

His reign has been credited as a golden age in England's history, a time of great peace and prosperity. Despite a happy marriage to Edith, the daughter of Earl Godwine, he is believed to have died a virgin and was consequently known as the Confessor. He died in 1066, and was succeeded by his brother-in-law, Harold Godwinson.

Harold Godwinson, King of England (*c.*1022–1066)

The last of the Anglo-Saxon kings, Harold Godwinson was born around 1022. He was the second son of Earl Godwine, the most powerful man in England. By his early twenties, Harold held an extensive earldom in eastern England and took as his concubine, Edith Swan-neck. In 1051 the family were exiled after an altercation with King Edward and all their lands and wealth were confiscated. With the help of their allies at home, the Godwines returned in 1052, forcing the king to take them back and reinstate their lands and titles. With the death of his father in 1053, Harold became the new earl of Wessex and had ascended to become the most powerful nobleman in the country.

Harold Godwinson

After a series of successful campaigns against the Welsh ruler, Gruffydd ap Llywelyn, in 1052–1053, Harold earned a reputation as an excellent military commander and his victories were celebrated throughout England. It is alleged that in 1054 he was sent by King Edward on a diplomatic errand to William, Duke of Normandy. The voyage began badly; Harold was shipwrecked and captured by Guy, Count of Ponthieu. After being rescued by William, Harold accompanied him in battle against Conan, the Duke of Brittany, and

was knighted shortly after. According to Norman sources, Harold then swore an oath of fealty to William over holy relics, promising that he would support his claim to the English throne when King Edward died. He then returned to England, only to become embroiled in a rebellion against his brother, Tostig. This resulted in Tostig's exile, and soon after King Edward became seriously ill.

On Edward's death in January 1066, Harold was elected as the new king of England and was crowned on 6 January. Much of Harold's reign was spent in defending the realm from foreign invasion. On 25 September, he defeated his brother and fellow claimant, King Harald Hardrada, at the Battle of Stamford Bridge. On 1 October, after hearing that the Normans had landed on the south coast, Harold marched the 240 miles to Hastings to face William.

On 14 October, a few miles from Hastings, the two armies came face to face. After a battle that raged all day, King Harold was killed, possibly by an arrow to the eye or cut down by the sword, and William emerged victorious. It is not known what happened to Harold's body after the battle; he may have been buried near the site or taken to Waltham by his concubine, Edith Swan-neck.

Ealdgyth, wife of Harold Godwinson and Queen of England (*c.*1034–unknown)

Born around 1034, Ealdgyth was the daughter of Aelfgar, earl of Mercia, and sister to Edwin and Morcar. She married Gruffydd ap Llewelyn, king of Gwynedd, around 1057 and bore one child, a girl named Nesta. Gruffydd was killed by his own men in Snowdonia around the time of Harold Godwinson's expedition into Wales in 1063, leaving Ealdgyth a widow and single mother.

In the spring of 1066, Ealdgyth married the newly crowned Harold Godwinson in a marriage of political convenience and was granted a small amount of property in England. Ealdgyth was in London at the time of the Battle of Hastings, and after Harold was killed, she was taken to Chester by her brothers, Edwin and Morcar, for protection. It is possible that she was pregnant and gave birth shortly after her arrival in Chester to a boy named Harold. She may also have been the mother of another of Harold's sons, Wulf. What happened to Ealdgyth after the Norman Invasion is unknown, though it has been speculated that she fled the country to either Ireland or Wales.

Edith Swan-neck, Concubine/Common Law Wife of Harold II

Also known as Edith the Fair and Edith the Rich, Edith Swan-neck was born into a noble family in Norfolk. Around the time that Harold became the earl of East Anglia (1045), the pair were contracted into a hand-fast union which lasted until Harold's death at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Edith held four houses in Canterbury which was probably where she bore Harold's five children – Godwin, Edmund, Magnus, Gytha and Gunhild. It is possible that she was also the mother to his son, Wulf, but this has not been definitely proven.

Edith is best remembered as the woman who identified Harold's body from 'intimate marks' on the battlefield at Hastings, and from there took him to be buried at the church at Waltham. Before the Norman Invasion, Edith had been a wealthy and extensive landholder with estates throughout Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire. As with many other Anglo-Saxons, she was dispossessed by the Normans and the remainder of her life remains a mystery.

Gyrth Godwinson (1032–1066)

A younger son of Earl Godwine, Gyrth Godwinson held extensive lands in England. By 1057, he held all of East Anglia and parts of Cambridgeshire. He is best remembered as offering to lead the English army to meet the Normans after their victory at Stamford Bridge. He fought and perished at the Battle of Hastings, alongside his brothers, Harold and Leofwine.. Legend has it that Gyrth was killed in single combat against William.

Leofwine Godwinson (1035–1066)

The younger brother of Harold, Tostig and Gyrth, Leofwine was another of Earl Godwine's sons. By 1059 he held lands in Hertfordshire, Middlesex and Buckinghamshire. Leofwine seems to have been especially close to his brother, Harold. The pair fled to Ireland together in 1051, when the rest of the family went to Bruges, and later shared the lordship of lands throughout Middlesex and Buckinghamshire. Leofwine was killed at the Battle of Hastings, along with Harold and Gyrth.

William, Duke of Normandy (*c.*1027/8–9 September 1087)

William, Duke of Normandy

William was born between 1027 and 1028 at Falaise in Normandy. The product of a brief relationship between his father, Robert, the 2nd Duke of Normandy and his mother, Herleva, the daughter of a local tanner, William came to be known as the Bastard by his contemporaries. After the death of his father in 1035, the boy William inherited the Duchy of Normandy with his great uncle acting as regent. Due to his illegitimacy, there were several Norman magnates who refused to accept the young William as the rightful heir and in 1040 they hatched a plan to murder him. The plot failed but William's guardians were killed.

By 1045, William was old enough to take control of the Duchy and successfully crushed the first threat to his power in 1047 at Val-ès-Dunes. It was after a visit to his distant cousin, King Edward the Confessor, in 1051 that William alleged he had been promised the throne of England. This was later confirmed with Harold Godwinson's visit in 1064. After King Edward's death and the coronation of Harold II in January 1066, William prepared to invade the country. The Norman army arrived at Pevensey on 28 September and defeated the English at the Battle of Hastings on 14 October. After his coronation

on Christmas Day, 1066, William spent the early years of his reign stamping out English resistance and strengthening the borders, including the building of defensive 'marcher' counties along the border of Wales in 1081.

William transformed the English landscape with his ambitious castle-building programme and replaced much of the English aristocracy and Church with his fellow Normans and other Frenchmen. From 1072, William spent most of his time attending to business in Normandy and leaving the kingdom in the hands of governing regents. While away in 1075, his men put down the Revolt of the Earls, the last serious threat to William's power. On hearing of the rebellion, William returned to England and ordered the execution of one of the ringleaders, Waltheof. This was the only time that William resorted to using capital punishment on a member of the English aristocracy during his reign.

In his lands in France, William dealt with two major rebellions; his son, Robert Curthose, attempted to seize power in Normandy 1077 and another in Maine in 1083. Problems arose also with his half-brother, Odo of Bayeux. Accused of oppression and misgovernment in William's absence, Odo was arrested and imprisoned for five years.

In 1086, faced with the threat of foreign invasion, William commissioned Domesday, the most famous land survey in England's history. The reason for the survey remains a mystery, but it gave him detailed information on England's land and resources. On its completion in August 1086, William summoned his noblemen and had them swear an oath of fealty.

In the following year, involved in fighting against the French king, William was injured after falling from his horse. He was taken to St Gervase and ordered that his son, Robert, should succeed him in Normandy, and his other son, William Rufus, in England. He died on 9 September 1087 and was buried at the abbey church of St Etienne in Caen, Normandy.

Harald Hardrada, King of Norway (1015–1066)

Born in 1015, Harald Sigurdsson was the son of the Norwegian petty king, Sigurd the Sow. At the age of fifteen Harald fought his first battle alongside his half-brother, Olaf, at Sticklestad. Olaf was killed, while the injured Harald fled to Kiev where he was given refuge by King Yaroslav. Harald stayed there for three or four years and then travelled to Constantinople to work for the emperor of Byzantine. Harald possessed natural fighting ability and quickly rose to become the commander of the emperor's special guard. Having amassed a great personal wealth, Harald left Constantinople in 1043. After a

brief time in Kiev, where he married King Yaroslav's daughter, he returned to Norway.

With the death of Magnus in 1047, Harald became the new king. His reputation for crushing enemies and his continuous warfare in Denmark earned him the nickname 'Hardrada', Hard Ruler. Harald believed that, as the successor to the Danish kings, he also had a claim to the throne of England. After King Edward's death in 1066, Harald planned to invade England to assert his claim and take the country by force. He was aided by the brother of King Harold, Tostig, who probably visited him in the spring of

1066. Within a few months, Harald's fleet was assembled and ready to depart. His first port of call was Shetland and Orkney, where he gathered reinforcements before sailing to England. On 10 September, with approximately 300 ships, he arrived at the mouth of the River Tyne. He was joined by Tostig and the pair began their conquest of the north of England.

At the Battle of Fulford Gate, they easily repelled local resistance and were able to take the city of York. On 25 September, Harald was confronted by the English army and was killed at the Battle of Stamford Bridge.

Tostig Godwinson, Earl of Northumbria (*c.*1020s–1066)

Born in the 1020s, Tostig was the third son of Earl Godwine and was exiled with the rest of the family by King Edward in 1051. On their return in the following year, Tostig married Judith of Flanders who bore him two sons; Skuli and Ketil. The couple were well known for their generous alms-giving and devotion, and completed a pilgrimage to Rome in 1061.

In 1055, Tostig became the earl of Northumbria. An area known for its lawlessness, Tostig was able to subdue Northumbria by implementing new laws and severely punishing offenders. He ruled until 1065 when rebellion broke out and he was accused of increasing brutality and misrule. His lands were confiscated by the king and Tostig was forced to take refuge in his wife's native home of Flanders.

Shortly after his brother's coronation in January 1066, which Tostig did not attend, he visited William of Normandy in the hope of forming an alliance. He was unsuccessful but eventually persuaded King Harald of Norway to undertake a joint invasion of England. They arrived on the English coast in early September and plundered the local towns and villages. They defeated the armies of the northern earls at the Battle of Fulford Gate and were able to take the city of

York. On 25 September 1066, Tostig and Harald met the English army at Stamford Bridge. King Harold offered to reinstate Tostig's lands if he switched sides but Tostig refused. He was killed during the battle, alongside Harald Hardrada.

Edwin, Earl of Mercia (*c.*1030s–*c.*1071) & Morcar, Earl of Northumbria (*c.*1030s–*c.*1087)

Little is known about the origins of Edwin and his younger brother, Morcar. Edwin succeeded to the title of earl on his father's death in 1062 and Morcar was elected as the new earl of Northumbria in 1065, following Tostig's dispossession. They supported the election of Harold Godwinson as the new king of England in 1066 and fought against the Norwegians at the Battle of Fulford Gate. Probably as a result of their losses at Fulford or the loss of Morcar's earldom, they were not present at the Battle of Hastings, but they were involved in a rebellion to place Edgar the Aetheling on the throne in the winter of 1066. When the rebellion failed, the brothers submitted to King William and accompanied him on a trip to Normandy in 1067.

Following Roger of Montgomery's appointment as the earl of Shrewsbury in 1068, Edwin felt that his position was under threat and sought help from Bleddyn ap Cynfyn of Gwynedd. William was quick to prevent any rebellion from forming and neither of the earls was involved in the northern revolt of 1069. Edwin's position was further threatened with the establishment of the earldom of Cheshire, and the brothers fled their lands in 1071. Edwin was betrayed by his followers and killed, while Morcar fled to Ely and was received by Hereward the Wake. However, Morcar was soon captured by William and spent the rest of his life in prison.

Edgar the Aetheling (*c.*1052–*c.*1125)

The grandson of Edmund II, Edgar was born around 1052 in Hungary. He was brought to England in 1057, probably as heir to the throne. Although known as the 'Aetheling', meaning throne-worthy, he was passed over by King Edward, possibly due to his young age and lack of kinsmen.

Edgar the Aethling

After the Battle of Hastings and the death of King Harold, Edgar, still a teenager, was at the centre of a plot to repel the Normans and have himself crowned king of England. The plot came to nothing and Edgar submitted to William in December 1066. In spring of the following year, he accompanied William to Normandy, returning at the end of the year. Edgar was treated well by the king but left England in 1068 for the Scottish court of King Malcolm III. Edgar was involved in the uprising of 1069, but after the rebellion was crushed, he once again submitted to the king.

In his later years he became a trusted ally of the royal family and was put in charge of an expedition into Scotland in 1097. He took up the cross and went on crusade in 1098, possibly spending several years in the Holy Land. He allied with William's son, Robert, and fought against the English king, Henry, at the Battle of Tinchebrai in 1106. He was taken back to England as a prisoner but was later pardoned and released. His death was not recorded in history but probably occurred around 1125.

Appendix 2: Timeline

1043
3 April: Edward the Confessor crowned at Winchester.

1051
King Edward promises the throne to William of Normandy.

1053
12 April: Death of Earl Godwine. Harold succeeds his father as Earl of Wessex.

1064
Harold travels to Normandy to renew King Edward's succession promise and swears fealty to the duke.

1066
4/5 January: Death of King Edward the Confessor and election of Harold Godwinson as the new king.
6 January: King Edward is buried at Westminster Abbey and Harold is crowned king of England.
24 April: Halley's Comet first appears in the English sky. Shortly after, Tostig attacks the Isle of Wight.
8 September: King Harold is forced to disband the Fyrd. Tostig and Harald Hardrada meet at Tynemouth.
20 September: Battle of Fulford Gate: the English are beaten by the Norwegians, led by Harald Hardrada and Tostig. King Harold begins the march north with his army.
24 September: The English army arrive at York
25 September: Battle of Stamford Bridge: King Harold and his army slaughter the Norwegians. Deaths of Harald Hardrada and Tostig.
28 September: William and his Norman army land at Pevensey on the south coast of England.
1 October: King Harold learns of the Norman landing and marches south.
6 October: King Harold arrives in London to gather reinforcements.
14 October: Battle of Hastings: the Normans defeat the English. King Harold and his brothers are killed.
21 October: Norman army advances to Romney. Outbreak of dysentery begins among Norman soldiers.
25 December: William is crowned king of England at Westminster Abbey.

1068
January–February: Rebellion breaks out in Exeter and is quickly crushed by King William.
11 May: Matilda crowned Queen of England at Westminster Abbey.

1069
September: Danish army lands at Kent and then sails north to the Humber, Rebellion breaks out in Northumbria and then spreads to Yorkshire
December: King William orders the Harrying of the North in response to the rebellion.

1071
Rebellion of Hereward the Wake.

1085
December: King Willliam commissions the Domesday Survey

1086
Domesday Survey completed.

1087
9 September: King William dies at the priory of St Gervase in Normandy.
26 September: King William II crowned at Westminster Abbey.

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